

[Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[Church Growth](#)
[Directory](#)
[Leadership](#)
[Ministry](#)
[New Church](#)
[News](#)
[TAP](#)
[Donate](#)



News

[Breaking News](#)

[Feature Focus](#)

[Celebrate](#)

[Conference News](#)

[Local Church News](#)

[Lifting Up...](#)

[NEWS Archives](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[SEC News Resources](#)

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[Sign up for SECUCC
Email Newsletter](#)

Southeast Conference FAQ's

[Who is the SEC?](#)

[Who is the UCC?](#)

[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)

[What Ministries are Available?](#)

[Is Training Available?](#)

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [LOCAL CHURCH NEWS](#)

News From Our Local Churches - April



Glenna Shepherd, pastor Decatur United Church of Christ, was a guest speaker at the Immigration Rally in Atlanta, GA. "I acknowledge as we gather prayerfully this morning that immigration is a complex issue. It's filled with exception and nuance. But the complexity does not excuse us from taking a stand against blatant injustice!" (*Paraphrase of speech by Rev Al Sharpton who addressed the issue in Arizona.*)

Debbie Spearman has posted the latest updates for the **Transforming Churches - Transforming Lives Campaign** from our local churches. *Thank You!*



Leadership Spotlight



Rev. Paul Gourdine
Community Congregational UCC / Montgomery, AL

Rev. Gourdine inspires people, young and old, from all walks of life as he uses his God-given abilities to teach, motivate, and spiritually uplift. [Read more about Rev Gourdine's ability](#) to transcend cultural differences and bring people together on common ground.

We asked the question -

"How Will Your Church Celebrate Holy Week?"

You responded with the following:

> **Sandy Creek UCC | LaFayette, AL**

Pastor Wayde Washburn -

Palm Sunday began with a processional into worship, but minus the palms. Using the scripture from Matthew 21, the processional was adorned with branches from various trees and clothing strewn along the path. The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering was received during the service. On Thursday night, worship began with events from the Last Supper, including a Foot Washing. The service concluded with an impassioned walk along the Stations of the Cross. Then, on Sunday morning, at 5:45, worshippers gathered outside around an open fire, greeted the morning sun, and watched as they burned their "sins" that they had nailed upon the cross during the Lenten Season, worshipped in Word and Sacrament, and

then joined in a wonderful breakfast together!

> **First Congregational UCC | Talladega, AL**

Pastor Reginald Holloway - On Friday a Good Friday Worship Service was held from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. The following ministers preached the last seven words of our Lord from the cross: Rev. Hardy Reynolds, of Talladega; Rev. Bud Precise of Birmingham, Rev. Sally Harris of Birmingham, Deacon Harvey Calhoun of 1st UCC, Talladega, and Pastor Reginald Holloway, 1st UCC, Talladega. On Easter Sunday, we had Sunday school at 9:00 a.m. taught by Sister Esther Holloway; at 10:00 we had Easter Brunch and at 11:00 we had our Easter Worship Service.

> **First Congregational UCC | Montgomery, AL**

Pastor Michael Garret - Clergy gathered on Good Friday to reflect on the seven last words of Christ:

Father forgive them - Rev. Gary Meyers, Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL

Today thou shall be with me in paradise - Rev. Paul Gourdine, Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, AL

Woman behold thy son -

Rev. Dr. Kendall Thomas

Why hast thou forsaken me - Rev. Robert S. Graetz, Jr.

I thirst - Rev. Lorenza Moore

It is finished - Rev. Dorinda Broadnax, Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, AL

Into thy hands, I commend my spirit - Rev. Dr. Rodney Franklin, First Congregational Church UCC, Birmingham, AL

> **Open Community Church UCC | Atlanta, GA**

Pastor Soo Man Chang - Easter Sunday worship; A lot of smiles and eggs!

Pictures speak

a thousand words. (*Pictured right:*

Easter worship and then photo of prosperous egg hunt).

> **Virginia-Highland Church | Atlanta, GA**

Pastor Michael Piazza - This year the church partnered with Decatur United Church of Christ, Decatur, GA (Glenna Shepherd) one of the newest churches in the Southeast Conference of the UCC; Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta, GA (Susannah Davis); and Praxis UCC, Atlanta, GA, (Chris Waldron) a new church start, to offer joint Holy Week observances. Virginia-Highland Church, hosted the Maundy Thursday service, where they told the Passover story and ended with a traditional stripping of the altar. Hand washing and communion were featured. On Good Friday, April 22, the Virginia-Highland Church sanctuary was opened from noon until 3 p.m. for prayer. A joint Good Friday Tenebrae service was offered at Decatur UCC, and featured music by a combined choir from Virginia-Highland Church and Decatur UCC.

Virginia-Highland Church held its Easter Sunday service



virginia-highland Church held its Easter Sunday service.

> **Garden of Grace UCC | Columbia, SC**

Pastor Andy Sidden - This year Holy Week was celebrated with a Last Supper drama, focusing on the disciples on Palm Sunday, and a multi-media drama on Good Friday. Easter Sunday brought us special music by the Celebration Choir and was followed by an Easter egg hunt on our lawn for the children.

> **Pilgrimage UCC | Marietta, GA**

Pastor Kim Buchanan - The church shared together in a re-enactment of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. After that, they listened again to the Passion narrative. Good Friday, 5:00-8:00 p.m. the youth presented an interactive Stations of the Cross experience called "The Last Walk" and had a powerful and meaningful meditative Good Friday experience. Easter Sunday, they brought out all the bells and whistles, well, actually, the hand bells and brass! We celebrated the resurrection with classical, contemporary, and folk music. Hallelujah! Christ is risen indeed!

> **Brookmeade Congregational UCC | Nashville, TN**

Pastor Linda White - The church celebrated with an all UCC potluck and service. All pastors and lay folks from First United Church (Steve Cottingham), Holy Trinity Community Church (Cindy Andrews-Looper) and Howard Congregational Church (Christophe Ringer) gathered. This is a Nashville tradition and this year was hosted at Brookmeade.



> **Pilgrim Congregational Church UCC | Chattanooga, TN**

Pastor David Brown - On Sunday, March 27, 2011 participated in the 16th Annual Strides of March to benefit Chattanooga Cares. The event is to raise awareness and funds for HIV/AIDS in the Tennessee Valley. Our team was called "Pilgrims on a Mission" and we had 28 members participate in the event. We raised a total of \$1,126.91 for Chattanooga Cares. The walk is a 3.1 mile walk through downtown Chattanooga. (Pictured right: Strides of March team members).



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Conference News - April	UCC History and Polity
News From Our Local Churches - April	Southeast Conference Campaign
Celebrations April 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church
A Word From Tim Downs - April	General Synod 2011

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▶ Conference Minister

▶ TAP Director

▶ SEC Donations

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▶ Annual Meeting

▶ Global Theological Education

▶ Local Church News

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▶ Bridge 4 Faith

▶ The Center for Progressive Renewal

▶ United Church of Christ

EVENTS CALENDAR

« < May 2011 > »

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

- [▶ Church Development](#)
[▶ Communications Director](#)
- [▶ SEC Churches](#)
[▶ Seminars/Webinars](#)
- [▶ Mission Insite](#)
[▶ Resource Center](#)

8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

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Southeast Conference United Church of Christ - 1330 West Peachtree Street, Suite 350 - Atlanta, GA 30309 || Office: 800.807.1993, Fax: 404.607.7939
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